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ABSTRACT

This language arts minicourse guide for Lampeter-Strasburg (Pennsylvania) High School contains a topical outline of a science fiction course. The guide includes a list of ten course objectives; an outline of the major themes and types of science fiction covered in the course; a description of the course content with emphasis on defining and analyzing science fiction through the works of such writers as H. G. Wells, Ray Bradbury, and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.; a review of fifteen suggested activities for students to perform; and suggestions for instructional materials, including texts, records, tapes, filmstrips, and films. The guide concludes with a list of science fiction novels and a list of some of the concepts which students who study science fiction should know. (RB)

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Language Arts Mini-Course

SCIENCE FICTION

Lampeter-Strasburg High School
Lampeter, Pennsylvania

1973

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CS 202 025

SCIENCE FICTION

OBJECTIVES:

1. To relate the past and the present to the future.
2. To see how the science fiction of yesterday has become today's reality.
3. To recognize the relationship between science fiction and scientific fact.
4. To explore the problems of the future: will technology be used to extend and communicate knowledge or to exert authority over us all and curtail our freedom?
5. To understand the role of the individual in a changing society.
6. To recognize that the creation of a strange machination is an extension of man and his imagination.
7. To investigate the philosophies, purposes and themes of leading writers in the field and to recognize the ethical values in science fiction literature and discuss them.
8. To examine the techniques of suspense, foreshadowing and imaginative language.
9. To enjoy science fiction as social criticism, prophetic literature, and a mixture of fact and fantasy.
10. To listen to, speak, read and write about the boundless opportunities of the future.

OUTLINE:

I. DEFINITIONS
   - A. Science
   - B. Fiction
   - C. Science Fiction
   - D. Types of Science Fiction

II. PROPHETIC SCIENCE FICTION OF THE PAST
   - A. Jules Verne's "Round the Moon"
   - B. Buck Rogers in the 25th Century

III. IMAGINATIVE SCIENCE FICTION OF EARLY RADIO

A. Orson Welles, "Invasion from Mars"

B. "X Minus One"

C. "Dimension X"

IX. SCIENCE FICTION AS SOCIAL CRITICISM

A. Aldous Huxley, Brave New World

B. Kurt Vonnegut, Cat's Cradle

V. FANTASY AND THE FUTURE

A. Ray Bradbury, S Is For Space

B. Kurt Vonnegut, "Slaughterhouse-Five"

C. H. G. Wells, "Time Machine"

D. H. G. Wells, "War of the Worlds"

E. "Toward the Year 2000: Can We Survive the Future?"

VI. BASIC QUESTIONS FOR ANALYZING SCIENCE FICTION STORIES AND NOVELS

CONTENT:

I. DEFINITION

A. Science (from Latin, scire; to know)

1. The state or fact of knowing
2. Systematized knowledge derived from observation, study and experimentation carried on in order to determine the nature of what is being studied
3. Concerned with systematizing facts
4. The scientific method
5. Filmstrip: Science department #142, "Science-Servant of Man."

B. Fiction (from Latin, fictio; a making, counterfeiting.)

1. A making up of imaginary happenings; any literary work portraying imaginary characters and events, as a novel, story, or play.
2. Distinguishing between fact and fiction

C. Science Fiction

1. Fiction of a highly imaginative or fantastic kind typically involving some actual or projected scientific phenomenon.
2. A twist on reality

D. Types of Science Fiction

1. "You-go-there"

a. Travel through space or time to a different world
b. Readers must be convinced that what is happening is supposed to be happening, even if contrary to normal world

2. "They-come-there"

a. Primary world with all laws and rules considered norm
b. Fantasy involves intrusion by creatures or ideas

II. PROPHETIC SCIENCE FICTION OF THE PAST

A. Students read in class, micro-classic pamphlet, "Round the Moon" by Jules Verne

1. A prophecy of Apollo Moon Project
2. Compare Verne's "vision" with factual material
3. Record and book set, L-S library, "To the Moon"
4. Intermediate United #13, Film MP-2-3045, "A Walk On the Moon"

B. Buck Rogers in the 25th Century

1. Mimeographed cartoon strip
2. Tape: "Buck Rogers in the 25th Century," Episodes 1-4, old radio show

a. What phase of this science fiction series has become factual?
b. What still seems "fantastic?"

3. Script of a Buck Rogers episode--students may tape their own complete with sound effects. (Record: "Science Fiction Sound Effects.)

III. IMAGINATIVE SCIENCE FICTION OF EARLY RADIO

A. Orson Wells, "Invasion from Mars."

1. Explain to students the circumstances of this actual recording
2. Ask for reactions if this were to happen today on radio. How about T.V.?

C. "Dimension X"

1. What is the twist of reality?
2. What is the shift in perspective?

IV. SCIENCE FICTION AS SOCIAL CRITICISM

A. Aldous Huxley, Brave New World

1. Life and times of Aldous Huxley; his work and influences on his writing.
2. Definitions and allusions

a. Conditioning: training of an individual to respond to a stimulus in a particular way. In Brave New World people are conditioned to think, act, feel, believe as the government wants them to.
b. Predestination: the act of deciding an individual's fate or destiny for him. In the World state each individual has been predestined according to the needs of society.
c. Thomas R. Malthus: an English political economist who propounded a doctrine on theory of population. In the World state mandatory birth-control measures are used to regulate the growth of population.
d. Ford: most important figure in the formation of the World state; in Huxley's Utopia the life, work and teachings of Ford as a source of inspiration and truth. Time is measured according to Ford.
e. Decanting: name given to completion of artificial and mechanical stimulation of the embryo resulting in what we would call birth. Huxley shows the complete control of the individual from the time of conception.

3. Themes

a. Conformity and uniformity
b. Science and technology versus man; which is master and which is slave?
c. What is the price for a "painless" society?

4. Character analyses

a. Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning
b. Henry Foster
c. Mustapha Mond
d. Bernard Marx
e. Lenina Crowne
f. Helmholtz Watson
g. Linda
h. John the Savage

5. Science Fiction or Prophecy

a. Compare some slogans of Brave New World with current catch phrases.
b. How close are we to Brave New World?

6. Tape: Aldous Huxley narrating Brave New World

B. Record, "Kurt Vonnegut reading Cat's Cradle."

1. How is this critical of society?
2. Prophetic?
3. Explain satire

V. FANTASY AND THE FUTURE

A. Ray Bradbury, S Is for Space

1. Reading of selected short stories

a. How is reality twisted?
b. Good versus evil themes

B. Record, "Kurt Vonnegut reading Slaughterhouse-Five" with discussion

C. Record, H. G. Wells, "The Time Machine"

D. Record, H. G. Wells, "War of the Worlds."

1. If a creature from another planet were to come here, what would he like best about Earth?
2. What would he like least?
3. Would he want to stay or leave quickly?

E. Carosel Slides and Cassettes: "Toward the Year 2000: Can We Survive The Future?

1. As you look into the future, what do you see?
2. How will life change?
3. What effects on our society will the following technological inventions have?

a. Electric car
b. Television-telephone
c. Laser beam
d. 2000 mph. jet
e. Central data storage
f. Disposable "paper" clothing
g. Interplanetary communication
h. Language translation machine

F. Students to search scientific journals for factual material and create their own science fiction around factual basis.

VI. BASIC QUESTIONS FOR ANALYZING SCIENCE FICTION
(Media & Methods, 12/72)

A. How would you like living in this particular society? What would you find most distasteful about it? What would you find most enjoyable about it?

B. If you could change one thing about this society, what would it be and why?

C. What would pose the greatest threat to this society? Why?

D. If a great holocaust happened, how would the society react? (For holocaust substitute famine, any great intellectual or social change, etc.)

E. What is the author's conception of man? Is man basically good? Bad? Trustful? Distrustful?

F. What allowances are made for the deviant or non-conformist in this society?

G. To what extent do you see present-day American society in the story? What would have to specifically happen for American society to become like the story?

H. How does this society view other societies? Suspiciously?

I. What is the relationship between the physical environment and the society?

*J. What role does the individual play in this society? Does society exist for the individual or the individual for the society?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

1. Write a letter, to be opened in 1995, to your teenage son or daughter.

2. Prepare and record a science fiction radio script with sound effects, etc.

3. Brave New World

   What would it be like to live in Optima? How do people get along in Tyrannia? Optima and Tyrannia are not real countries. Optima is the best country there could ever be. Tyrannia is the worst. They are good or bad in whatever ways the student wants them to be.
   Student is to pick either country. He may change its name if he wants. He is to choose a time, past, present, or future. He is to choose one aspect (or several) of life in that country--jobs, schools, clothes, houses, families, transportation, government, etc. He is to write or draw about that part of life. He could write laws, design cities, machines, etc. (May be a group project with each group making a presentation to the class.)

4. Design clothes for the future.

5. In a picture, play or essay, describe what the year 2000 will be like.

6. Make up a cartoon or joke about the future.

7. Write or role-play a talk between a salesman for a people-freezing firm and a possible customer.

8. Draw the worst or the best kind of cyborg you can imagine.

9. Think about what you can do to shape the kind of world you want.

10. "Baker's Dozen" Activity (See Values Clarifications)

11. Fall-out Shelter Problem (See Values Clarifications)

12. Investigate evidence of life in outer space. Write a convincing paragraph or two either proving or disproving possibility based on the facts now available.

13. Student is to read at least one supplementary book and prepare a book report. (Oral/written)

14. Creative writing session using record, "Science Fiction Sound Effects"

15. Speak to an older person about the impact of rapid change on their lives.

MATERIALS:

1. Texts: Micro-classic - Round the Moon by Jules Verne
   Brave New World by Aldous Huxley
   S Is for Space by Ray Bradbury

2. Records: Caedmon, Kurt Vonnegut reading Cat's Cradle; Slaughterhouse-Five
   "Science Fiction Sound Effects"
   "Time Machine: and "War of the Worlds" by H. G. Wells
   "Invasion from Mars" by Orson Welles

3. Tapes: Golden Age Radio, "Buck Rogers in the 25th Century"
   Radio Yesteryear, "Brave New World"
   narrated by Aldous Huxley; "X Minus One" - "Dimension X."

4. Filmstrips: "Toward the Year 2000: Can We Survive the Future?"
   (c cassettes)
   (Carosel slides)--Science #142 - "Science-Servant of Man."

5. Films: Intermediate Unit #13
   MP2-3045 "A Walk on the Moon"
   MP2-4415 "The Universe: Flight to the Stars"

SCIENCE FICTION CLASSROOM LIBRARY:

(2) The Andromeda Strain
(2) Brave New World
(2) Cat's Cradle
(2) Fahrenheit 451
(2) Fantastic Voyage
(2) Fellowship of the Ring
(2) The Green Hills of Earth
(2) The Hobbit
(2) The Illustrated Man
(2) I Sing the Body Electric
(2) Two Towers
(2) Return of the King
(2) The Martian Chronicles
(2) Night Gallery
(2) 1984
(2) R is for Rocket
(2) The Spaceman Cometh and Other Cosmic Tales
(2) Star Trek
(2) The Time Machine
(2) 2001: A Space Odyssey
(2) The War of the Worlds

SCIENCE FICTION TITLES:

Alas, Babylon -	Frank
Brave New World -	Huxley
Canticle for Leibowitz -	Miller
Cat's Cradle -	Vonnegut
The Child Buyer -	Hersey
A Clockwork Orange -	Burgess
Dr. Strangelove -	George
Earth Care Manual -	Firnhaber
Fahrenheit 451 -	Bradbury
FailSafe -	Burdick and Wheeler
Future Shock -	Toffler
The Greening of America -	Reick
The Illustrated Man -	Bradbury
Nightmare Age -	Pohl
1984 -	Orwell
On the Beach -	Shute
Player Piano -	Vonnegut
Sleep Two, Three, Four! -	Neufeld
2001: A Space Odyssey -	Clarke
Year of the last Eagle -	Rienow

S Is for Space by Ray Bradbury

In preparation for understanding of scientific basis for this group of short stories, students should be asked to look up and make a short report to class the following terms:
(one term per student; report due day begin story) "Chrysalis"

1. Chrysalis
2. Normal heart rate, respiration rate, body temperature
3. Osmotic process

"Pillar of Fire"

1. Anachronism
2. Incinerator; catacomb
3. Custom of burial
4. Custom of cremation
5. Amontillado

"The Man"

1. Who is the "Man?"

"Zero Hour"

1. Impregnable
2. Impressionable
3. What are the four dimensions?

"Time in they Flight"

1. Superstition
2. Antiseptic

"The Pedestrian"

"Hail and Farewell"

1. What is a midget? (Physical characteristics.)

"The Smile"

1. What is "Mona Lisa?" Who painted it and when?

"Dark They Were, and Golden Eyed"

"The Trolley"

1. What is a trolley? (A report)

"The Flying Machine"

"Icarus Montgolfier Wright"

1. Icarus
2. Montgolfier
3. Wright

"Invisible Boy"

"Come into My Celler"

"The Million-Year Picnic"

"The Screaming Woman"